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BOOK REVIEWS

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**IS CONSCIENCE AN EMOTION?** Three Lectures on Recent Ethical Theories (delivered at Leland Stanford Jr. University). HASTINGS RASHDALL, D.Litt., D.C.L., LL.D., F.B.A., Fellow and Lecturer of New College, Oxford, Canon Residentiary of Hereford. The Houghton Mifflin Co. 1914. Pp. xiv, 200. \$1.00.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge gratefully the interest of Dr. Rashdall's searching examination of the recent restatements of the view that conscience, or the moral consciousness, is nothing but emotional approbation or disapprobation. And there is admirable vigor, persistence, and lucidity in his reaffirmation of the rationalistic counter-position that moral judgments rest on the "category" or "notion" of value or good. The first lecture, "Moral Reason or Moral Sense," gives a compact historical survey of the issue between emotionalistic and rationalistic ethics, as it has appeared in English philosophy. The second lecture, "The Morality of Savages," criticises at length the attempts of Westermarck, in his *Origin and Development of Moral Ideas*, and McDougall, in his *Social Psychology*, to support emotionalistic ethics by evidence drawn from evolution, to the effect that the moral consciousness is nothing but a highly developed form of emotions and instincts traceable in savages and even in animals. There is an appendix to this chapter, containing acrimonious polemics against Dr. McDougall's criticisms of Dr. Rashdall, which seems to me entirely out of place in these Memorial Lectures. The third lecture, "Value or Satisfaction?" criticises the identification of value and satisfaction, more especially as defended by William James.

In broad outline, Dr. Rashdall's position is that of the champion of rationalism versus emotionalism, of a metaphysical (and theological) versus a merely anthropological and psychological treatment of the moral consciousness. The issue is worth debating for him, because the decision cuts deep into our practical lives and our theoretical convictions. In practice, so Dr. Rashdall holds, emotionalism weakens the sense of duty and makes moral education ineffective. In theory, if we are willing to make "the assumption that our ultimate moral judgments represent real deliverances of Reason—self-evident judgments about the real nature of things" (p. 49),

we have a basis for inferring that the universe is spiritual and purposeful. "We have the right to claim that in the moral consciousness of man at its highest there is contained a true revelation of the rational Will which expresses itself in nature" (p. 50). On the same evidence we can believe in God's love, and cherish a hope of immortality. These inferences follow, according to Dr. Rashdall, if we can show that our moral judgments are not "merely the formulated result of some kind of feeling or emotion," but that "they represent one particular activity of that same self which also gives us the fundamental intellectual truths which are presupposed by all thinking and knowing; and therefore can claim the same kind of objective truth or validity as the axioms of mathematics or those self-evident laws of thought upon which in the last result all scientific reasoning depends" (pp. 46, 47).

The chief arguments in support of this thesis may perhaps be summarized as follows: (a) The alleged feelings of approbation and disapprobation are hybrids. Judgments such as "this is good," "this is better (or worse) than that," mean more than "I like this" or "I like this more (or less) than that." In short, to like is one thing, to approve and value is another, even if emotional preference and intellectual estimate of value should happen to coincide. This becomes especially clear when we realize that comparisons of likings tend always to reduce themselves to comparisons of degrees of pleasantness and unpleasantness. Or, to put it differently, when we ask for the "reason why," the evidence or ground of our moral judgments, we have to choose between two alternative answers. The emotionalist points to the *fact* of liking as ultimate unchallengeable evidence; for, as Hume said, "'t is impossible in this particular we can ever be mistaken." The rationalist urges that our likings may or may not be what they *ought* to be. He insists on the criticism of likings by a standard, an ideal, a principle of duty resting on a principle of good—in short, on a realm of objective values which may be, but is not necessarily, reflected with accuracy in our emotional preferences. The analysis of the developed moral consciousness of grown-up men and women can, according to Dr. Rashdall, result in none but the rationalistic thesis. (b) But what then of the arguments of the evolutionary emotionalist? To him Dr. Rashdall makes far-reaching concessions. While insisting, against the evolutionist, on the impossibility of explaining away the evidence drawn from the analysis of the mature moral consciousness, Dr. Rashdall in his turn is forced to allow that if you trace back the evolution of that consciousness, there sooner or later comes a point where not only the

explicit recognition of duty and value ceases, but where even large drafts on the "implicit" no longer suffice to support the rationalistic thesis. Where the line is to be drawn is hard to say. Dr. Rashdall makes a valiant attempt (pp. 84 ff.) to trace a hazy notion of right and wrong even in the conduct of the most primitive savages, but on the whole declares himself ready to admit that in animals certainly no recognition of standards of value is to be found, and that the morality even of savages and children is mainly "customary" and "emotional." The net result is that he has to argue for the emergence, at some point or other in the course of evolution, of a distinctively new non-emotional capacity for recognizing value—a recognition which must be, *a priori*, immediate, intuitive. (c) The argument against the remaining forms of emotionalism, viz., that all those things, and only those things, are good which either (1) are desired or (2) which satisfy, rests on the same logic as the argument against identifying value with liking. Desires and satisfactions demand criticism, and criticism implies a standard which feeling, as such, cannot supply. "The identification of the good with the satisfactory reduces diversities of moral judgment to differences of taste quite as much as the theory of the moral sense school" (p. 171). The principle, in a nutshell, is that value is *thought*, not *felt*. Provided this be granted, Dr. Rashdall is prepared to meet the emotionalist more than half-way by admitting, e.g., that feelings of pleasure are always among the things which we think good; that sometimes the feelings aroused are the only elements of value in an experience (p. 151 ff.); that what we think good is always something which satisfies (or is capable of satisfying) some one; and even that, in last analysis, the satisfaction must be that of "a part of my own nature" (p. 176). No emotionalist, even though he be a hedonist, can quarrel with the sweet reasonableness which Dr. Rashdall here exhibits. The difference between him and his opponents lies obviously not, in the main, in the list of things which they respectively judge to be good, but in the divergence of principle over the question whether our value-judgments register facts of emotional preference or immediate intuitions of objective worth on the part of Reason (with a capital R).

This summary, I trust, shows where the strength of Dr. Rashdall's argument lies. A few points, however, seem to call for comment.

(1) Seeing that the dispute concerns less the list of concrete values than the nature of the act of valuation, it might seem as if little more than arid academic technicalities were at stake, if it were not for the wider issues involved. This being so, I, for one, should have been grateful if Dr. Rashdall had developed this side of his argument

more fully, the more so as he must be well aware that it is possible to be a rationalist in ethics without agreeing at all with the metaphysical and theological inferences, for the sake of which he is anxious to establish the rationalistic thesis. Mr. Bertrand Russell and Mr. G. E. Moore, for example, whom Dr. Rashdall rightly quotes in support of his view that good is ultimate, unanalyzable, and apprehended by immediate intuition, would, I take it, repudiate utterly his whole metaphysical superstructure. And more than that; Dr. Rashdall oscillates in his language between speaking of value as an "objective" principle, recognition of which is "a piece of insight into the true nature of things" (p. 177), and as a "category" or "notion" with which Reason "invests" things, or which exists only through a specific activity of the rational self. Here again, he must know, many rationalists would not follow him. Russell and Moore, holding value to be something which the intellect apprehends, would reject the view that it is a category inherent in the intellect, or a character conferred on things by a certain kind of thinking. In short, a rationalist may be either a realist or an idealist, and in the present state of the controversy between these two schools, Dr. Rashdall should have been careful to point out where the realistic rationalists would refuse to follow the inferences which he, as an idealist, is prepared to draw.

(2) To my own thinking, the real issue between emotionalism and rationalism is whether only feelings are valuable or other things as well. The emotionalist, as I understand him, holds that the only primary values are feelings, and that all else has only a secondary or derivative value as the cause or condition of feelings. The rationalist, on the other hand, recognizes primary values in the world of objects. As for feelings, he may either, like Dr. Rashdall, class them among the things which have value, or treat them as a mere index or reflex of objective values. If we conceive the issue in this way, the point of the assertion becomes clear that the emotionalist's valuations can have no universal validity, no reference to an "objective standard." I am not sure that this is made equally clear by Dr. Rashdall's way of stating the issue as being "by what sort of faculty we know" the difference between right and wrong. Again, when he says that "moral judgments are a kind of thinking, not a kind of emotion or feeling or desire" (p. 138), his expression does not seem altogether happy. No emotionalist would, strictly, claim that a feeling "knows," or fail to distinguish between an emotion and a judgment. His thesis is that the judgment asserting the existence of a feeling of liking (or aversion) for a thing has the same meaning

as the judgment asserting the goodness (or badness) of that thing. The rationalist insists on the essential difference between these two kinds of judgments. The issue therefore is not strictly between emotion and judgment, but between taking moral judgments as registering the occurrence of an emotional attraction or aversion and as expressing the apprehension, by intuition or thought, of an inherent value in things.

(3) I could have wished that Dr. Rashdall had dealt more fully with the difficulties arising for his theory from the acknowledged conflicts between our moral judgments. If values are apprehended by intuition, how do we ever make mistakes? We might conceivably fail to intuit a value which is there, but we could hardly intuit one which is not there. Or again, if the intellect "invests" things with value, how does it ever come to misapply this category? Dr. Rashdall says calmly, "It does not shake my belief in the validity of that category that it is sometimes misapplied" (p. 79). But a critic might retort, "How do you know whether, and where, it is correctly applied?" Granted that our moral judgments presuppose an "objective" standard, we must, in view of the disagreement in detail between our judgments, confess ourselves to be ignorant of its nature. If so, how much, after all, is this "insight into the true nature of things" worth? Is not the position which rationalism at best establishes exiguous and of little importance? Dr. Rashdall should not have left himself open to this line of argument.

(4) Finally, one cannot but regret that, in his last chapter, Dr. Rashdall has passed by, with a bare mention, Dr. Bosanquet's version of the identification of the good with the satisfactory; the more so as Dr. Bosanquet agrees with Dr. Rashdall in maintaining the necessity of a criticism of our actual desires. In fact, Dr. Bosanquet tries to supply the "logic" of this criticism, and thus his version of the theory would appear to escape the objections which Dr. Rashdall urges against James's version of it.

The comments I have ventured to make will help to show how far-reaching and interesting are the problems which Dr. Rashdall's lectures open up. Room could have been found for some of these points, if less space had been given in the first lecture to the historical retrospect, though one would have been sorry to miss the excellent criticism of Hume, culminating in the brilliant epigram which describes Hume's theory as "the apotheosis of flunkeyism."

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